

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: ST. VINCENT GENERAL ELECTIONS

1. FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE NOMINATED THIRTY-TWO CANDIDATES TO CONTEST THIRTEEN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEATS IN THE ST. VINCENT GENERAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ON DECEMBER 9. THE ST. VINCENT LABOR PARTY LED BY FORMER PREMIER R. MILTON CATO IS FIELDING ELEVEN CANDIDATES. EVIDENTLY CATO AND EBENEZER JOSHUA, FORMER DEPUTY PREMIER IN THE MITCHELL-PEOPLE'S POLITICAL PARTY ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT, HAVE CONCLUDED A "DEAL." BOTH JOSHUA AND HIS WIFE, IVY, ARE WITHOUT SVLP OPPOSITION IN THEIR BID FOR RE-ELECTION. JOSHUA'S PARTY, WHICH WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE ST. VINCENT HIGH COURT AS THE GENUINE PPP AFTER IT HAD DISSOLVED INTO TWO FACTIONS, IS PUTTING FORTH ONLY THREE CANDIDATES. IN ADDITION TO JOSHUA AND HIS WIFE, HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER CLIVE TANNIS AFTER TWO MONTHS OF FENCE STRADDLING, DECIDED TO CAMPAIGN UNDER THE PPP BANNER. THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY TO VOTE AGAINST THE NO CONFIDENCE MOTION WHICH BROUGHT DOWN THE MITCHELL-PPP ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT AND THE ONLY MINISTER IN THAT GOVERNMENT JOSHUA REGARDED AS LOYAL TO HIM, TANNIS MAY HAVE HOPED THAT HIS COLLABORA-

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TION WITH BOTH JOSHUA AND MITCHELL MIGHT HAVE EARNED HIM A

FREE RIDE IN THE ELECTIONS. INSTEAD, BY HIS INDECISION IN CHOOSING SIDES, TANNIS WAS NOT COVERED BY THE CATO-JOSHUA "DEAL" AND THUS HAS TO RUN AGAINST CANDIDATES FROM BOTH CATO'S SVLP AND MITCHELL'S PARTY.

2. THE "BREAK-AWAY" FACTION OF THE PPP IS CONTEMPTUOUSLY CALLED THE "JUNTA". THE "JUNTA," HEADED BY PREMIER JAMES F. MITCHELL, AND COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKS MINISTER OTHNEIL R. SYLVESTER AND INCLUDING EDUCATION MINISTER ALPHONSO A. DENNIE, AND HEALTH MINISTER VICTOR I. CUFFY, IS CONTESTING SEATS. AFTER FAILING TO WIN IN THE HIGH COURT THE RIGHT TO REPRESENT ITSELF AS THE PPP, THE JUNTA IS CAMPAIGNING AS A PARTY WITHOUT, HOWEVER, ADOPTING A FORMAL PARTY NAME OR ORGANIZATION.

3. THE FOURTH PARTY CONTESTING SEATS IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IS THE ST. VINCENT AND GRENADINES WEST INDIAN NATIONAL PARTY (WINP). ACTIVE IN THE WEST INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE AS FAR BACK AS THE 1940'S, WINP'S LEADER GEORGE CHARLES IS ATTEMPTING HIS SECOND COMEBACK IN ST. VINCENT POLITICS. STARTING IN POLITICS IN TRINIDAD, CHARLES RETURNED TO ST. VINCENT IN THE LATE 1940'S, AND IN 1951, HE AND HIS 8TH ARMY OF LIBERATION CAPTURED ALL OF THE ELECTED SEATS IN THE LEGISLATURE. HOWEVER, CHARLES LATER QUIT POLITICS AND REPORTEDLY WENT TO THE U.S. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. RETURNING TO ST. VINCENT, HE PRESENTED HIMSELF AS AN INDEPENDENT IN THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTIONS ONLY TO WITHDRAW BEFORE THE ELECTIONS WERE ACTUALLY HELD. THIS TIME CHARLES AND THREE OTHER CANDIDATES, INCLUDING ONE REPUTED TO BE HIS ILLEGITIMATE SON, ARE RUNNING ON THE WINP TICKET.

4. THE FIFTH PARTY, THE RADICAL DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM MOVEMENT LED BY DR. KENNETH JOHN, A LAWYER, IS CONTESTING TWO SEATS. JOHN, WHO IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE DFM, WAS ALSO ONE OF THE "YOUNG INTELLECTUALS" IN THE DEFUNCT EDUCATION FORUM OF THE PEOPLE WHICH LAST SUMMER EVEOVED INTO THE DFM.

5. COMMENT: IN ST. VINCENT AS IN MOST OF THE ISLANDS OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN, POLITICS IS POLARIZED ON A PERSONAL BASIS. NO SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES OR IDEOLOGIES HAVE DIVIDED THE SVLP OR PPP. VOTERS IN ST. VINCENT HAVE EITHER BEEN FOR OR AGAINST JOSHUA OR CATO IN PREVIOUS ELECTIONS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR PERSONALITIES.

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HOWEVER, IN THIS ELECTION JOSHUA AND CATO ARE APPARENTLY ON THE SAME SIDE, THUS VOTERS ARE ALIGNING THEMSELVES EITHER FOR OR AGAINST THE MITCHELL-SYLVESTER JUNTA OR THE CATO-JOSHUA COALITION. UNLIKE THE U.S. AND OTHER MORE SOPHISTICATED POLITICAL ENTITIES, ST. VINCENT HAS NO LARGE POOL OF INDEPENDENT VOTERS FOR THE FIRST-TIME CANDIDATES TO APPEAL TO FOR VOTES. ON THE BASIS OF THE INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE TO US, IT APPEARS THE SVLP WILL MOST LIKELY WIN AT LEAST EIGHT SEATS, ENOUGH TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITH

A CLEAR MAJORITY, WHICH CATO WILL NO DOUBT HEAD. THE PPP WILL
WIN AT LEAST THE TWO SEATS CONTESTED BY THE JOSHUAS. THE JUNTA
LEADERS, MITCHELL AND SYLVESTER, SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE HOUSE
THOUGH PERHAPS WITH DIFFICULTY. NEITHER THE ST. VINCENT AND THE
GRENADINES WEST INDIAN NATIONAL PARTY NOR THE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM
MOVEMENT IS EXPECTED TO WIN A SEAT.
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